

# SNACKING *sorted.*

20 effortless snack swaps to make your diet instantly healthier



MOONBEAM THERAPIES



You might already have figured out what to eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner but what about the spaces in between? ‘What should I snack on if I get hungry?’ is a question that often comes up in my nutrition clinic. So much so that I thought it worth pulling my thoughts together in this little guide...

The advice to eat little and often – to graze – is out. Nutritional science now recognises (mainly through studies looking at what happens when you don’t eat) that, for most people, the ideal ‘diet’ scenario is that they eat three meals a day with no snacks in between. This means your body gets a rest from eating from time to time, which it really does need in order to reset.

That might seem miles away from where you feel you are right now, and that’s not unusual. When you work on your diet as a whole, your cravings and energy levels will come back into line if you focus on eating real food, always having a source of protein and plenty of veg, and scaling back starchy carbs. While your energy levels rebalance themselves, it can be helpful to have a small snack to keep your blood sugar levels on an even keel – although there are other reasons you snack, so we’ll look at why snacking happens in a moment.

As a nutrition coach, I want to make sure any snacks you do have are the best ones for your health, so read on for my top 20 snack ideas you can easily assemble yourself PLUS five tasty snack recipes for you to try. Sadly, many of ready-made snacks, while they pretend to be healthy, are filled with high-sugar dried fruits (which can upset your blood sugar levels) or additives, so assemble your own where you can.

Here’s how...

# Why do you *snack*?

## 1.

Often, people eat for reasons other than actual hunger. That might be from boredom, out of habit or because someone brought some sharables into the office that looked tasty. This is not a time to snack. What you need cannot be found in the biscuit barrel. Snack fix: if you're not hungry, don't eat. If you're tempted to snack, ask yourself, 'Am I really hungry?'

## 2.

Another reason you might end up at Snack Central is that you haven't had a decent, protein-based breakfast that keeps you feeling fuller for longer. Toast or cereal for breakfast is a sure-fire way to a mid-morning energy dip that will leave you wanting to refuel before lunch. Snack fix: pick a protein-packed breakfast like porridge (or overnight oats) with berries and seeds, or some kind of egg-based option. Even a protein shake works if you're in a hurry.

## 3.

Ever had a dreadful night's sleep then been forced to prop yourself up with coffee and snacks through the day? It's no surprise that lack of sleep is bad news for health. As far as snacking is concerned, there is some unofficial law that states you will almost certainly feel hungrier if you're often forced to get by on less sleep than you need. Snack fix: if you recognise yourself here, it's time to make sleep a priority. Every single aspect of your health is crying out for it.

## 4.

Leaving very long gaps between meals can leave you feeling hungry and for a good reason. Lunch at 1pm, then not eating your evening meal till 7 or 8pm is a long gap. In THIS case, it might make sense to squeeze in a little something part-way through. Snack fix: if you know you'll have a very long gap between two meals, plan ahead, so you can have a healthy snack to hand. Planning ahead means it's more likely you'll make healthful choices.



# snack Size

By definition, snacks are small. They are not intended to be the size of an actual meal, so take note of the portion sizes included here. TIP: if you're eating from a larger packet – say, nuts or popcorn, take out only a snack portion, transfer to a small container and put the rest of the bag back in the cupboard for another time.



# 20 IDEA FOR *healthy snacks*

## MIXED NUTS

Nuts are an ideal snack and perfect for taking on the go. They're high in healthy fats and naturally filling. Throw in a few seeds if you like, too. Snack size: a small handful.

## FRUIT, NUTS + SEEDS

Choose a fruit like an apple, pear or 2 plums and have with a few nuts and seeds. Simple enough to take to work or eat on the go, if needed. Snack size: fruit (approx. 80g), plus 5 to 10 nuts and a dessertspoon of seeds.



## COTTAGE CHEESE BOATS

Use a little gem lettuce as the boat to hold your cottage cheese and top with chopped cucumber or other salad veg. Perfect for work-from-home days. Snack size: 2 little gem leaves + 150g cottage cheese.

## POPCORN

Popcorn is considered a whole grain and contains disease-fighting polyphenols. Buy the salty type ahead of the sweet, and you'll get that same delicious hit as you would from potato chips. Snack size: 20g/ 1 cup.



# 20 IDEA FOR *healthy snacks*

## TAMARI ROASTED NUTS + SEEDS

Create your own mix of nuts and seeds with a tasty salty topping, like soy sauce. Make in a bigger batch to save time and portion accordingly. Place mixed nuts and seeds on a baking tray with a few splashes of tamari, stirring well, then baking in the oven for 5-10 mins. Snack size: a handful.

## OATCAKES WITH TOPPING

A couple of oatcakes topped with unsweetened nut butter, hummus, guacamole, taramasalata, cream cheese and cucumber, smoked mackerel paté or cottage cheese and cucumber is a tasty option. Snack size: 2 oatcakes spread with your choice of topping – 150g cottage cheese, ½ a small tub of hummus (150g), 1 tablespoon of guacamole, cream cheese, taramasalata or nut butter.



## YOGHURT WITH MIXED BERRIES

Quark or cottage cheese mixed with low sugar berries (any will do – like raspberries, blueberries or strawberries) makes a lovely sweet treat if your energy is flagging. Snack size: a generous handful of berries plus 150g plain yoghurt, cottage cheese or quark.

# 20 IDEA FOR *healthy snacks*

## SEAWEED THINS

Seaweed is a great source of iodine, an important mineral that is often missing in modern diets and essential for thyroid health. If you've not tried them, do. They're like a crisp that your body will love. Buy the simple salted ones rather than sweetened varieties. Snack size: a 5g pack.

## HUMMUS WITH CRUDITÉS

This lovely chickpea dip with your choice of chopped cucumber, red pepper or celery is a snacking favourite. Chickpeas are a great source of vegetarian protein and helpful for rebalancing hormones, too. Snack size: as many veggie sticks as you fancy + ½ a small tub of hummus (150g).



## AVOCADO WITH SEEDS

The healthy fats in avocado help stave off cravings. Sprinkled with an oil and vinegar dressing, plus some toasted pine nuts (or a seed mix) it feels like a delicious treat. Snack size: ½ an avocado + a small handful of pine nuts or seeds.

## FETA, OLIVES + TOMATOES

You can't beat feta for that wonderful salty hit. Team with olives and cherry tomatoes, and it feels like the deli counter has come home. You might find feta already cubed and in brine at your local supermarket. Snack size: 6 cubes of feta, 6 olives + a small handful of cherry tomatoes.

# 20 IDEA FOR *healthy snacks*

## STUFFED CELERY STICKS

The natural shape of celery makes it perfect for stuffing. Find your own favourite filling, such as cream cheese or unsweetened almond butter. Snack size: 1 celery stick + 1 tablespoon cream cheese or nut butter.

## MISO SOUP

A lovely savoury addition to your diet is miso. Tasty and helpful for female hormone balance. Team with an oatcake, and it really does feel like a complete mini meal. Snack size: 1 mug instant miso soup + 1 oatcake.



## BOWL OF SOUP

Whether you choose a bowl or a mug depends on convenience, but a veg-based or protein-based soup is great for a chilly day and really fills you up. Choose a soup without potatoes, rice or noodles. One with veggies, beans, lentils or meat will give you the protein to keep cravings at bay. Snack size: 1 small bowl/ mug (about ½ a carton if you're buying fresh).



# 20 IDEA FOR *healthy snacks*

## TURKEY OR HAM ROLL-UPS

Slices of turkey breast or ham filled with cream cheese and your choice of sliced pickle (gherkin) or cucumber/ tomato, then rolled up could hardly be easier to whip up if you're feeling peckish. Snack size: 2 slices turkey or ham + 1 teaspoon of cream cheese per slice + your choice of veggies.

## HARD-BOILED EGGS + SPINACH

You might have already seen this combo in takeaway luncheries. Steal it. It's practically as easy (and certainly much cheaper) to make your own. Snack size: 2 hard-boiled eggs and however much raw spinach you fancy.



## EDAMAME

Little pots of these soya beans have been emerging in lunch outlets over the last few years. They're delicious, easy to eat at your desk if you have to and good for female hormone balance if that's relevant for you. Snack size: ½ a mugful – about the size you'd be able to pick up in snack pots in shops.

# 20 IDEA FOR *healthy snacks*

## DARK CHOCOLATE & ALMONDS

Sometimes you'll fancy a sweet treat, and that's a fact. Your best option is nuts covered in dark chocolate, which has less sugar than milk chocolate. Snack size: 30g chocolate-covered nuts.

## DIY TRAIL MIX

Steer clear of shop-bought mixes and make your own, leaving out the high-sugar dried fruit. Make yours from a mix of nuts and seeds, including something exotic like cacao nibs for a real treat. Snack size: a handful.



## FRESH COCONUT

A real taste of holidays long gone, coconut is filling, thanks to the fibre content, and contains healthy fats. What else do you need? The brave might buy their own coconut, but plenty of supermarkets and luncheries will sell you their own pre-packed, which is perfectly acceptable. Snack size: 80g fresh coconut.





5 GREAT  
*healthy snack*  
RECIPES



# AUBERGINE CRISPS

Serves 4

## INGREDIENTS

1 medium aubergine

2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

25g grated parmesan

1 tsp Italian seasoning

1 tsp garlic powder

Sea salt + freshly ground black pepper

## METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Cut the aubergine into very thin rounds - on a mandoline, if possible. Spread out the slices on paper towels in an even layer. Season lightly with salt, then let sit for 10 mins. Wipe any visible moisture off the slices with a paper towel and flip. Repeat salting, resting, and drying process once more.

Transfer the aubergine slices to a large bowl and toss with oil. Add Parmesan, Italian seasoning, and garlic powder. Season with black pepper and toss until the slices are evenly coated.

Arrange the slices in an even layer on a large baking sheet, making sure they don't overlap. Bake until golden and crisp - about 16 to 18 mins. Leave to cool





## KALE CHIPS

Serves 4

### INGREDIENTS

75g cashew nuts  
(ideally soaked for 2 hours)  
1 shallot, chopped  
2 tbsp nutritional yeast flakes  
½ tsp garlic salt  
4 soft large dates, chopped  
2 tbsp lemon juice  
2 tbsp water  
2 tbsp apple cider vinegar  
250g bag of chopped kale

### METHOD

Blend all the ingredients, except the kale, until thick. Add a little more water if needed.

Place the kale in a bowl and pour over the sauce. Massage thoroughly with your hands. Preheat the oven to 150°C. Distribute the kale on a lined baking tray in a single layer and bake for 15-20 mins. Carefully turn them over and cook for a further 5 mins.

Cool completely then store in an airtight container (it will keep for about 3-4 days).





## COURGETTE SUSHI

Serves 2

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium courgettes
- 115g cream cheese
- 1 tsp Sriracha hot sauce (optional)
- 1 tsp lime juice
- 135g crab meat
- ½ carrot, cut into thin matchsticks
- ½ avocado, diced
- ½ cucumber, cut into thin matchsticks
- 1 tsp toasted sesame seeds

### METHOD

Using a vegetable peeler, slice each courgette into thin, flat strips. Place the strips on a paper towel-lined plate to sit while you prep the rest of your ingredients.

In a medium bowl, combine cream cheese, Sriracha (if using), and lime juice. On a cutting board, lay out the courgette slices and spread with a thin layer of cream cheese. Top the left side with a pinch each of crab, carrot, avocado, and cucumber.

Starting from the left side, tightly roll up your courgette slices. Repeat with the remaining slices and fillings. Sprinkle with sesame seeds before serving.



# FRUIT + NUT CHOCOLATE BARK

## INGREDIENTS

350g dark chocolate

125g blanched almonds,  
toasted and chopped

100g unsweetened dried fruit  
(e.g. cranberries or mango)

pinch of sea salt

## METHOD

Line a baking sheet with parchment.

Melt the dark chocolate by filling the bottom of a saucepan with a couple of centimetres of water and bring to a simmer over a medium-high heat. Put the chocolate in a glass bowl and set over the simmering water, stirring occasionally.

Once melted, tip into the prepared tin and smooth with a spatula, so the chocolate is evenly distributed. Scatter over the remaining ingredients (you can add a pinch of dried chillies if you're feeling brave) and chill in the fridge until the chocolate sets (about 30 mins). Peel off the parchment and break into pieces. Store in an airtight container for up to a month (if it lasts that long).

